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ABSTRACT

This booklet emphasizes the importance of National Education Goal 1, which states that all children should be ready to learn when they start school. The booklet also explains the educational and social effects that early childhood programs can have on young children, and shows how the Nebraska State Board of Education, citizen groups, and school districts have responded to National Education Goal 1 in Nebraska. Nine projects that involve collaborative efforts between school districts, social service agencies, and private corporations are highlighted. These projects are examples of effective ways for communities to respond to National Educational Goal 1. It is recommended that communities provide comprehensive support for young children from birth through age 4, and that they improve support for young children and families in public school. A Community Report Card checklist is provided for individuals or community planning groups to rate their own community's performance in relation to certain key indicators of school readiness, such as access to high-quality early child care and education, parent education and involvement, and health and nutrition. (MDM)

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Promoting Nebraska's Future

National Education Goal 1:

By The Year 2000 All Children In America Will Start School Ready To Learn

A Primer for Community Level Planning Groups

PS 020995

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Starting Out Ready to Learn Means . . .

Focusing on . . .

- the critical periods of children's growth and socialization from birth to age eight
- developing in children a sense of self-worth, self-control and the motivation to explore the world
- providing children with timely immunization against disease, good nutrition, and basic health care
- providing information and other resources to families to support them in their role as parents

Why Goal 1 Is Important to Nebraska Children and Families

- child poverty in Nebraska rose in the 1980's by 51%, now affecting 56,850 children and youth; poverty and living in areas of concentrated poverty puts children at risk.
- teen out-of-wedlock births rose by 23% in the 1980's; in 1990, 1,737 teen mothers gave birth. Teen parenting negatively impacts BOTH the parent and the child.
- the number of low birth weight babies born in Nebraska is below the national average, BUT minority group infants in Nebraska have significantly higher rates of infant mortality and neonatal mortality than the population as a whole. Low birthweight was a concern for more than 1200 newborns in 1990.
- a growing lack of insurance limits access to basic medical care by substantial numbers of both urban and rural Nebraska children and rural children experience special risks caused by isolation.
- substantial numbers of Nebraska preschool-aged children are not immunized on schedule.

Early Childhood/Family Education Can Make A Difference

Investing in high quality early childhood and family education programs is a more effective and fiscally sound strategy to correct major social problems such as school drop outs and drug abuse than are efforts to intervene once the patterns of failure are established. It is now widely recognized that voluntary participation in such programs by children and their families can provide long-term benefits and save tax dollars. For example:

- A $1 investment in early childhood and parent education has been shown to save as much as $6 in public resources later required for remedial education, welfare and incarceration.
- At age 19, children who had participated in a highly regarded early childhood program at ages 3 and 4 were found to have the following positive characteristics over children who had not had the opportunity to participate:
  - Less than half as much need for special education
  - More than forty percent fewer instances of dropping out
  - About half as many instances of dependence on welfare
  - Forty percent fewer arrests
  - A one-third higher rate of literacy
  - A two-fifths higher rate of employment
  - Two times greater enrollment in post-secondary education.
- Parent education programs such as those Legislatures in Minnesota and Missouri have funded have been found to:
  - Diminish the developmental and educational differences between more affluent and poor children at entrance into kindergarten;
  - Cause all parents to become more supportive of schools and become more active in helping their children benefit from school;
  - Offer the opportunity to intervene and correct conditions of risk (e.g., vision and hearing problems) early in children's lives.

Nebraska Citizens Have Responded to National Education Goal 1

A 1990 Governor appointed Task Force on Goal 1 adapted the National Goal 1 Objectives to address the needs of Nebraska children and families:

- All children will have access to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs that improve their capacity to be successful learners.
- All parents, as their children's first and most important teachers, will have access to the information and support they need to assist them in carrying out this responsibility.
- All children will receive the nutrition and health care needed to have a healthy start in life and to enhance their capacity to be successful learners.
- Community, social, health, and educational agencies will collaborate and coordinate early childhood services to make the most efficient use of resources.
- Primary programs will support and extend the benefits derived from children's participation in quality prekindergarten experiences.

Source: The National Goals for Education: Nebraska's 1991 Progress Report

The Nebraska State Board of Education Has Responded to National Education Goal 1

The State Board of Education through its High Performance Learning framework has made Early Childhood Education a priority objective. The State Board advocates a community-based family centered system of early childhood and family education which is:

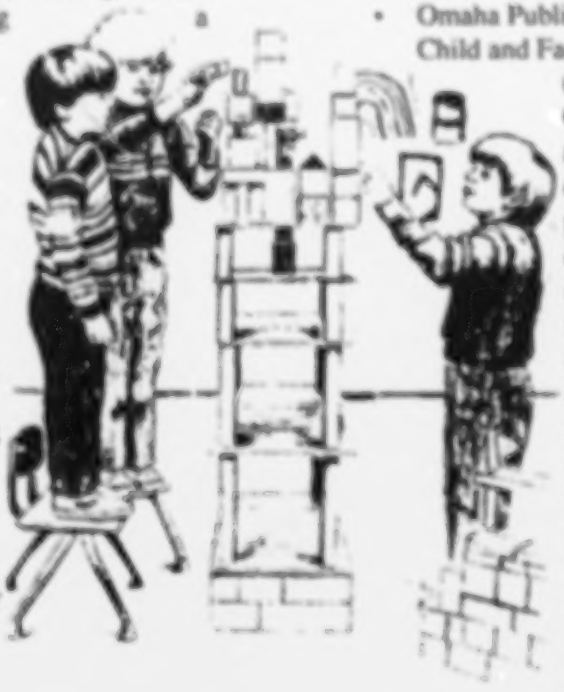
- Coordinated with existing public and private early care and education programs in the community;
- Demonstrates the use of combined funding sources, including parent fees for those able to pay;
- Serves a diverse range of children, but targets those with the greatest need;
- Influences the restructuring of the early grades of school.

Promising Partnerships: Nebraska Communities Are Responding to National Education Goal 1

Several school districts have been awarded grants for Early Childhood Pilot Projects through LB 567. Each project is demonstrating collaboration with existing services, puts a strong emphasis on parent support and involvement, and reflects developmentally appropriate practices.

- Scottsbluff/Gering Public Schools in collaboration with Panhandle Community Services are developing a comprehensive project to serve the high population of teen parents in Scottsbluff County. Services are addressing the needs of the student parent(s) and the children through parenting education, development of workplace skills, and child care. [Contact Person: Sharon Chamberlin, (308) 635-3089]

- Bellevue Public Schools in collaboration with Child Saving Institute of Omaha is providing a program reaching approximately 80 families which combines the Missouri Parents As Teachers model with Building Nurturing Families. All participating families are receiving a basic parent education component; families requiring more intensive intervention will receive that support though the services of Child Savings Institute. [Contact Person: Vicki McGuire, (402)291-6509]



- Falls City Public Schools is working with Head Start and private child care and preschools to offer a comprehensive range of early childhood services including a center-based child development program for all interested families having three- and four-year-old children. There is a strong emphasis on training in developmentally appropriate practices for all early childhood professionals in the community including the kindergarten/primary staff. [Contact person: Kathy Palmer, (402)245-2712]

- Omaha Public Schools is collaborating with the Child and Family Development Corporation (Head Start), Family Service of Omaha, community service agencies, neighborhood organizations and child care providers to address early childhood and parent education needs in an inner city neighborhood. Services reaching over 400 children will include needs assessment, parent education, support for child care providers, and coordination of available services. In addition OPS provides preschool in a number of elementary schools using both local and federal funds. [Contact person: Linda Spencer, (402)554-6477]

Selected examples of other Nebraska communities where schools and other community groups or agencies are working together to promote the development of young children and families are described below:

- Through its 16 grantees, Head Start provides comprehensive child development services to over 3000 children in communities across Nebraska. Over half the eligible children and substantial areas of the state continue without services. Recently collaboration between Head Start and public schools has been growing. Wahoo Public Schools [Contact person: John Brennan, (402)443-3051] and Stanton Public Schools [Contact person: Annette Aldalpe, (402)439-2639] are now collaborating with Head Start grantees to provide Head Start in Saunders and Stanton Counties.

- Westside Community Schools has received a grant from the Kiewit Corporation to add services to the district-sponsored early childhood programs which currently serve toddlers through eight-year olds in part and full day programs. The grant enables the addition of a parent education program and funds to enhance the salaries of staff in the six early childhood centers.
[Contact person: Carolyn Law (402)390-6465]

- Ralston Public Schools has received a grant from US West to expand their parent education program. The program which began under district sponsorship in one school now serves the entire district. Ralston also provides a preschool program in two schools and is working with the Child and Family Development Corporation to locate a Head Start classroom in the district.
[Contact person: Janice Branch, (402)331-0540]

- Crete Public Schools, Alpo, Farmland Industries, Blue Valley Head Start, and the local mental health agency are working together to create a family resource center to serve the entire community. The center will be

constructed on school property and will provide a wide range of services including 24 hour child care. [Contact Person: Jody Isernhagen (402)471-3464]

- Cross agency teams from six communities (Scottsbluff/Gering, Kearney, Falls City, Bellevue, South Sioux City, Omaha, and Kearney) participated in Project Parent training during 1991-92. Project Parent is a framework that provides training and resources to address family education, involvement and support activities in Nebraska communities. The framework incorporates best practice content and principles from successful state and national programs that honor a family strengths-based approach. [Contact Person: Carol Fichter, Early Childhood Training Center, (402)391-8295]

- A growing number of Nebraska communities are conducting local planning efforts around the National Education Goals. A listing of current Nebraska 2000 Communities my be secured from the Department of Education.

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How Nebraska Schools, Community Agencies, and the Business Community Can Work Together in Support of Young Children and Families

The report of the National Task Force on School Readiness, *Caring Communities*, offers two major recommendations:

Recommendation #1 -
Caring Communities provide comprehensive support for young children ages 0 - 4 and their families.

Caring communities strengthen informal supports and develop quality programs for children and families. These programs fill gaps in health, family support, child care and related human services. Programs strive to link services for more continuous and convenient help to families. Communities participating in Nebraska 2000 and other community-wide planning efforts can provide the stimulus for the development of such comprehensive services within communities.

Recommendation #2 -
Caring Communities improve support for young children and families in public school.

Elementary schools implement "developmentally appropriate" teaching and assessment practices, strengthen efforts in parental involvement and professional development for staff, and work with community agencies to provide appropriate and effective services to children and families. Community Nebraska 2000 efforts can be a major force in linking schools and community groups and businesses.

Getting the Most From an Investment in the Early Years

Outcomes for children in the birth through age eight age range are strengthened when programs and services display research-based elements of quality including:

- Staff trained in child development
- Low staff-child ratios and group sizes
- Developmentally appropriate curriculum, methodology, and assessment
- Extensive family involvement and access to resources
- Culturally responsive approaches
- Ongoing staff development and supportive supervision

GOAL 1 Community Report Card

How does your community rate on these indicators?	In Place	Not Yet	Target Year
1) Access to high quality early care and education			
• Head Start available to all eligible three and four year olds			
• eligible children and familes participating in early childhood special education			
• increasing numbers of early childhood programs accredited			
• voluntary registration system for family day care homes			
• preschool programs provided in all school districts			
• low staff turnover rate in early care and education programs			
• salaries at early care and education programs commensurate with staff preparation			
• system to link child care providers with local school for training and resources			
• increasing numbers of providers affiliated with professional organization			
• continuity for children within and among programs			
2) Parent education and involvement			
• parent education programs provided in all school districts			
• parents receive usable information upon birth of child			
• all parents read to children everyday			
• home visitation program available for new parents			
• family literacy a part of all preschool and parent education programs			
3) Health and nutrition			
• all children vaccinated by age two			
• all children have breakfast program available at school or child care			
• all eligible children are enrolled in WIC			
• all pregnant women receive prenatal care			
• low incidence of low birthweight babies			
• low teen pregnancy rate			
• all children have health insurance coverage			
• low incidence of child abuse and neglect			
• high use of Health Check (EPSDT) by eligible children			

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A packet of information to guide local communities and schools in planning for early childhood and family education programs is available from the Office of Child Development, Nebraska Department of Education.

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